

# Gregory W. Porter

State Representative • District 96

## 1999 Session of the Indiana General Assembly

### State budget provides tax cuts, funding for education

The new state budget will make a very real difference in the lives of many Hoosiers. Some of the highlights include:

*Program Funding*

- **Public education:** Statewide total formula funding increase of an average of 4.7 percent in calendar years 2000 and 2001, with minimum guarantees of funding increases of at least 2.5%. Funding was increased for both at-risk and academic honors programs. Local schools and libraries also received \$76 million in technology funding.
- **CHOICE:** \$5 million increase per year in funding for home health care for the elderly
- **Higher education:** appropriations were increased by 7.0 percent in fiscal year 2000 and 4.7 percent in 2001
- **Vocational education:** incentives for school corporations to provide programs in which high employment demand exists
- **A new \$50 million 21st Century Research and Technology Fund** that will promote high-tech industries located in Indiana
- **Social services:** Funding for the seriously mentally ill is increased by \$3 million in 2000 and \$6 million in 2001. MRDD programs will receive an additional \$9 million in funding.

*Savings to Taxpayers*

- Elimination of county welfare fund and county welfare administration funds from local property taxes
- Elimination of inventory tax for 87 percent of farms and businesses

#### *Children were a top priority for the 1999 General Assembly*

**Child Custody** -- Courts may now give equal consideration to long-term guardians such as grandparents or relatives other than parents when awarding custody of a child if it is in the best interest of the child. Currently, courts must place priority on placing a child with his or her parents.

**Tobacco** -- Legislation has been enacted which will help prevent teenage access to tobacco products, while expanding responsibilities for retailers and clerks. Retailers who sell products to minors will be penalized, all billboard advertising of tobacco will be banned, vending machines will be removed from areas accessible to young people, and children and teenagers will be prohibited from entering tobacco specialty stores. In addition, fines will go into a fund to pay for programs to educate young people on the hazards of tobacco.

**Autistic Children** --The State Department of Health will extend additional care, services and materials to autistic children less than 21 years of age. This will ensure that autistic children will receive the same assistance as children with special health care needs.

**Reading Skills** -- A reading diagnostic program will be established to improve skills among younger students. The program allows children in first and second grades to receive an individualized plan if it is determined they are having difficulty reading.



Rep. Porter discusses legislation with Rep. Jeb Bardon and Ways & Means Chairman Pat Bauer.

#### Funding for District 96

*Build Indiana Projects*

- Mapleton Fall Creek CDC -- \$100,000
- Crooked Creek Multi-Service Center -- \$100,000
- Phillips Temple/ICEE -- \$50,000
- Martin Luther King, Jr. CDC -- \$25,000
- Butler Tarkington Neighborhood Association -- \$50,000
- College Branch Library -- \$50,000
- Rocky Ripple Town Board -- \$25,000
- Community Action of Greater Indianapolis -- \$50,000
- Health Net -- \$25,000
- Indiana Black Expo EDC -- \$25,000

*Road Funding*

- Marion County -- \$13.4 million
- Indianapolis -- \$13.5 million

#### *Hoosiers will save \$672 million over the next two years in tax cuts*

- **Homeowners:** a new income tax deduction for property taxes up to \$2500
- **Dependent children:** an increase in the income tax deduction from \$1000 to \$2500
- **Small businesses:** property tax “add-back” repealed so business owners can deduct the amount of their property taxes from their state income taxes
- **Renters:** increased the income tax deduction from \$1500 to \$2000
- **Senior citizens:** an increase in the income tax deduction from \$1000 to \$1500 and an increase in the property tax deduction for seniors from \$1000 to \$2000

#### *How to Contact Representative*

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## Education & Schools

**Indiana School for the Blind and the Indiana School for the Deaf** -- House Enrolled Act 1904 establishes the Indiana School for the Deaf and the Indiana School for the Blind as separate agencies independent from the state. The legislation provides for administration by a school board that is appointed by the governor.

**ISTEP Gateway Examination** -- House Enrolled Act 1050 allows students who do not pass the ISTEP Gateway Examination to graduate, provided they meet certain other requirements. The legislation also provides that the case conference committee determines eligibility for graduation of certain students with disabilities. The act also provides that all students in Grade 10 must take the examination.

**Educational Standards** -- A roundtable has been created to develop educational standards for Indiana students. Standards would be set for each grade level, easily comparable to national and international standards, written in an easy-to-understand manner, and distributed to students and parents.

**Postsecondary Proprietary Education Grants** -- Combines the higher education award program for students at postsecondary proprietary educational institutions with the award program for students at other institutions of higher learning.



Rep. Porter debates legislation on the House floor.



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232-9995

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## House publications available

The following publications can be requested free of charge from my Statehouse office by calling 232-9995:

*Relax . . .* -- This informational booklet for senior citizens discusses a variety of issues, from taxes to health problems to leisure activities.

*Higher Education* -- A 24-page publication for those interested in pursuing a higher education degree, detailing many Indiana colleges and universities as well as occupational and vocational schools.

*Guide to State Agencies* -- This booklet details various agencies within Indiana state government, listing phone numbers, functions and general areas of responsibility for each of the state agencies.

*Hoosier Fun and Facts* -- Designed for elementary school-aged children, this information and activity book teaches students about their state through a combination of text, puzzles and other educational activities.

## Is the address label on this mailing correct?

Please check the address label on this mailing for accuracy. If there are any errors or if you are receiving duplicate mailings, please contact my office at 232-0367. Every effort will be made to correct the mistake.

I appreciate your assistance in keeping the mailing list updated. This will ultimately result in more efficient delivery and substantial savings to taxpayers across the state.

## State Phone Numbers

State Information . . . . .	1-800-457-8283
Indiana House . . . . .	232-9600
Indiana Senate. . . . .	232-9400
Governor's Office. . . . .	232-4567
Secretary of State . . . . .	232-6531
Motor Vehicles. . . . .	233-6000
Natural Resources. . . . .	1-800-622-4931
Utility Regulatory. . . . .	1-800-851-4268
State Tourism . . . . .	1-800-289-6646
Department of Correction. .	1-800-680-5889
Department of Education . .	232-6611
Department of Health . . . .	233-1325
Family & Social Services . .	233-4454

# Rep. Porter votes to protect consumers

**Stopping “slamming” & “cramming”** -- House Enrolled Act 1628 gives the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) authority to impose a civil penalty on a telecommunications provider if the provider has violated the law or rules prohibiting the unauthorized switching of telecommunications providers or the billing of unauthorized services -- known as "slamming" and "cramming."

"Slamming" is the term used to describe the telecommunications practice of changing a person's phone service provider without the customer's permission. "Cramming," on the other hand, refers to billing for services not authorized by the customer.

**Telephone solicitation** -- House Enrolled Act 1434 imposes stricter regulations on professional solicitors and fundraisers while protecting telephone customers.

The act requires a professional solicitor to disclose several items to the attorney general, including the portion of a contribution that goes to the solicitor and the portion that actually goes to the charity.

It also requires professional solicitors to disclose many of those items at the beginning of each call, including the name of the company and the phone number and address of the location from which the call is being made.

**HMOs** -- House Bill 1309 establishes an external procedure for grievances against HMOs. The bill would require the Indiana Department of Insurance to hear grievances filed by individuals who have been denied services by an HMO.

The review would allow a physician who specializes in the treatment in question rather than a general practitioner or other physician to determine whether the patient should receive the requested services. Furthermore, the bill has provisions to ensure the review is done in a timely fashion. In life-threatening cases, the review will take place within five days.

This bill provides a less costly and less time-consuming procedure for HMO grievance review. The independent reviews would be paid for by HMOs except for a \$25 filing fee paid for by the consumer.